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TEACHER RATING IN LARGE CITIES

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In a questionnaire investigation conducted by A. C. Boyce¹ in 1914, in connection with an attempt to devise a teacher-rating scale, certain points were brought out in regard to the method of rating teachers in the smaller cities. Mr. Boyce found that the almost universal practice in teacher rating, so far as the cities reporting were typical, was to depend upon the unanalyzed judgment of some school officer, usually the superintendent. In the smaller cities printed forms for rating teachers were almost unknown.

In order to ascertain exactly the method of rating teachers in use in the large cities, the writer directed the following letter to the superintendents in all of the 32 cities in the country which have a population of more than 150,000:²

Will you please send me the forms that you use in rating elementary-school teachers. If you use no printed forms will you please indicate the general plan you use in estimating the teacher's efficiency.

If you can give me any information as to when and where definite forms for rating teachers were first used I shall be very grateful. I am inclosing postage, and shall very much appreciate an early reply.

¹ *Fourteenth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, pp. 14-15.

² On the basis of the 1910 census.

Twenty-seven superintendents responded to this request. The facts for two of the remaining five cities have been gathered from other sources.¹

Eleven of these cities use no rating forms. These still depend upon the general estimate of the superintendent, the principal, the special supervisor, or all combined, supplemented by the teacher's record with regard to experience and professional preparation. In Chicago much stress is laid upon the teacher's successful experience, while in Cincinnati a great deal of stress is laid upon his preparation and continued professional growth.

TABLE I

Group I Cities Using No Rating-Form	Group II Cities Using Form Made Up of a Few Com- prehensive Terms	Group III Cities Using Form Composed of a Long List of Unclassified Items	Group IV Cities Using Forms Consisting of Long Lists of Classified Items
Baltimore	Jersey City	.....	Boston
Chicago	Kansas City	Atlanta*	Cleveland
Columbus	New York	Milwaukee	Detroit†
Buffalo‡	Oakland	Toledo	Newark
Cincinnati	Philadelphia	(Minne- apolis)§	New Orleans
	St. Louis	Denver	Providence
Indianapolis	.....	.....	Rochester
Los Angeles	.....	.....	Washington
Portland	.....	.....	.....
San Francisco	.....	.....	.....
Seattle	.....	.....	.....
St. Paul	.....	.....	.....

*Atlanta uses a form containing ten rather inclusive terms. She can be more justly classed with Group III, however, than with any other group.

† Elliott scale, slightly modified.

‡ No form for regular teachers. Form of sixteen items for substitute teachers.

§ Form received late, not included in the above discussion.

The rating-forms used in the seventeen remaining cities defy accurate classification. Among some of these there is a wide variation in the emphasis placed upon the various phases of teaching ability, and consequently in the items included in the rating-form. Even between those cities which agree as to the importance of the large bases of teaching ability there is little agreement in regard to the extent to which these larger factors shall be further analyzed. The four groups in Table I represent the classification

¹ See Elliott: *City School Supervision*, pp. 154-60, for forms in use in New Orleans and Philadelphia.

which the writer has made, in order to facilitate a further discussion of these forms.

Superintendents in some of the cities in Group I report certain inclusive qualities which they try to keep consistently in mind in forming judgments of teachers, but they do not attempt to formulate these in writing. One of these eleven superintendents expresses his regret that he has no rating-form. Another writes very emphatically that he wishes nothing so mechanical. The other nine are silent on this point.

Form I, used in St. Louis, is typical of the forms sent in from cities of Group II:

FORM I

PRACTICAL EFFICIENCY			PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES		
Management of Children	Instruction	Attention to Details of School Business	Scholarship	Professional Interest and Growth	Personal Qualifications

Such a form suggests the large divisions of teaching ability. It leaves to the person rating, the task of analyzing these comprehensive terms, estimating in terms of the itemized elements of each and summing up the results in the form of ratings in the few inclusive terms. The alternative to this method for the person using a form of this sort is to depend upon a general impression based on a few conditions which, experience has taught him, stand out in recitations of a given grade, good or bad. In exceptional cases this may be a trustworthy method, but the writer believes that such a scheme is far less reliable in general use than a more detailed form.

Form II, used in Toledo, is an example of the forms used in the cities of Group III:

FORM II

1. Name of teacher
2. Scholarship
3. Success in teaching
4. Preparation of lessons
5. Ability to hold attention of class

6. Success in discipline and control of pupils
7. Spirit of school
8. Care of room
9. Health
10. Personal appearance
11. Professional industry and spirit
12. Self-control
13. Attitude toward children
14. Attitude toward parents
15. Attitude toward other teachers
16. Does the teacher co-operate heartily with the principal?
17. Is she faithful? Reliable? Progressive? Punctual?
18. Do outside duties or pleasures render this teacher relatively less efficient in her school work?
19. What is the most successful feature of this teacher's work?
20. The weakest feature?
21. How many times has this teacher been tardy this year? How many days absent?
22. Approximately how many times have you visited this teacher's room during the present year?
23. Do you recommend that this teacher be retained, basing your answer solely upon the question of efficiency?
24. Remarks

It is unwise to criticize a rating-form too harshly when the results obtained by its use are not known. However, the Toledo form, representing the type of form used in the cities of Group III, invites adverse criticism from several points of view.

This form shows no evidence of an attempt at a thoroughgoing analysis of teaching ability and no consistency in the arrangement of the items. It appears to be little more than an attempt to enumerate as many as possible of the items which are connected with the teacher's efficiency, with no indication of their relative importance or of their interrelationships. All of the items are apparently considered co-ordinate. There is also much duplication among the items. "Ability to hold attention of class" cannot be judged as distinct from "Success in discipline" and "Control of pupils"; neither can "Preparation of lessons" be separated from "Professional industry and spirit"; while "Success in teaching" must, at least partially, include many of the other items.

This form is fairly representative of early attempts at form-making. It represents a necessary stage in the development of rating-forms, but this stage is happily passing, if we may judge by the fact that very few of the important cities now use forms of this type.

Form III, used in Cleveland, represents well the forms used in the cities of Group IV:

FORM III

1. TEACHING POWER:

- a) Does she apply thought and method to the preparation of her daily work?
- b) Is she definite in her instruction? Thoughtful?
- c) Does she develop power in her pupils?
- d) What kind of results does she obtain?

2. EXECUTIVE POWER:

- a) Is she successful in discipline?
- b) Does she secure a responsive working spirit in the school?
- c) Are her relations with the principal's office satisfactory in matters of reports, care of property, discipline of pupils, etc.?
- d) What are her relations with the patrons of the school?
- e) What are her strong points?
- f) What are her weak points?

3. PERSONAL INFLUENCE:

- a) Does she inspire her pupils and develop in them enthusiasm for work?
- b) Does she inspire her pupils to independence in work?
- c) Does she influence her pupils for good beyond the time they are in her presence?
- d) Are her relations with other teachers in the building wholesome?
- e) Is her work interfered with by outside pleasures or duties or the state of her health?

4. PROFESSIONAL SINCERITY:

- a) Is she sincere and earnest in her work?
- b) Does she measure thoughtfully the outcome of her practice?
- c) What is her attitude toward the large interests of her profession?
- d) Is she frank and candid in her dealings with pupils?
- e) In what spirit does she receive the suggestions of the principal and supervisors?
- f) Does she regard them as personal or professional?

5. GENERAL CULTURE:

- a) Are her scholarship and general information accurate and adequate?
- b) Are her manner, control of voice, and use of English satisfactory?
- c) Is she alert, progressive, and open-minded to new ideas?

- d) What are her special interests?
- e) Has the teacher's personality been sufficiently faulty to require serious criticism?
 - (1) Have you made such criticism?
 - (2) How often?
 - (3) With what effect?

While the position of a number of the items might be seriously questioned, this form shows clearly an attempt to make a real analysis of the ability of the teacher. Some such detailed itemized form for rating is necessary for most principals and supervising officers, if not for all. The superintendent who has analyzed teaching ability and satisfied himself as to the elements constituting it may think it unnecessary to formulate his scheme in writing. This is probably the position which the advocates of the St. Louis type of form would take. Where the actual rating and supervision must be left to other persons, however, as it must be in the larger cities, a form containing a rather definite and detailed list of items is very necessary.

The new rating-forms just prepared for use in Boston almost deserve a separate classification. The Department of Educational Investigation and Measurement, under the direction of Frank W. Ballou, has worked out the most elaborate scheme of teacher rating yet devised in any school system. Three long forms of four pages each are used, and in these a complete analysis of the teacher's total efficiency is attempted. One form deals at length with the teacher's professional preparation; another with his continued professional growth, as evidenced by educational articles or books written, educational literature read, summer schools attended, etc. The third form is made up of two general topics: Personal Equipment and Ability as a Teacher. Personal equipment includes personal characteristics under nine sub-topics. Teaching ability includes management of the room, management of the class, and teaching the lesson. Eighteen items are subsumed under these last three sub-topics.

These forms are too bulky to be included in this study, but the foregoing description will give some idea of the elaborate forms which are being devised in the more progressive cities.

The earliest use of a printed form for rating teachers, which could be traced, was in Milwaukee in 1896. Other cities began the use of such forms as early as 1900.

The situation in regard to teacher rating in the large cities is encouraging, at least in so far as the scale for the total efficiency of the teacher is concerned. While nothing approaching a common agreement as to the elements which constitute efficiency in the teacher and far less agreement as to the comparative value of each has been reached, there is a great deal of experimentation in progress, which should lead in time to a solution of the problem.